Application Form Completion Guidance (External Candidates)

Complete all the sections of the Application Form clearly in either type or black ink. To ensure candidates are selected only on merit, we remove your personal (biographical) information your application form as part of the selection process.

Completing 'Suitability for the Post(s)'

The first stage of the selection process is when we assess your application against the **essential and desirable criteria** for the job to decide whether you should be interviewed. We use a **competency-based approach** to selection. The term 'competency' is used to describe the knowledge, skills, abilities and experience of an individual and how these attributes manifest themselves in observable behaviour.

Make sure your application gives **evidence** against each of these essential and desirable criteria stated in the job description, because your application will be assessed against these. We suggest you use each of the essential and desirable criteria as **headings**, addressing each one in turn. Give examples in the form of a brief overview of what you did. Also explain why you did what you did and what the outcome was. Just describing your experience does not demonstrate your ability to do something.

For example, if one of the essential criteria is to demonstrate effective team working, saying 'I have worked in various kinds of teams in various roles throughout my career' does not demonstrate your competency. Instead, you should provide evidence of what you did within a team. Did you lead the team at any stage? If so, say why and how you did this. Did you ensure the team met all its targets? Again, describe how you did this. Include details of any feedback you received from a customer or a colleague and the benefit to them. If you suggested ways in which the team could work more efficiently or effectively, describe how you identified the need and what the outcome was for the customer or end user.

You may find it useful to apply the above acronym 'Context, Action, Result = CAR:

- C = context - briefly describe the situation

- A = action - state your role, what you did, why you did it and how you did it

- R = result - describe what the outcome was, and how this was evidenced

Below are two examples of demonstrating competency for an essential criterion that asks you to demonstrate.

1. Communication skills, and,

2. Ability to analyse complex information

… the right way and the wrong way!

Communication Skills, e.g. 'the ability to communicate effectively to a wide range of audiences'

Good Example:

'I was asked to conduct a presentation on some research to a group of eminent scientists from outside our research facility. I discussed with my line manager what outcome we wanted to achieve from the presentation and the current knowledge levels of the target audience to determine pitch and style. We agreed that they needed to leave the conference with both a broad understanding of how we had conducted the research, the results and what they mean for future work in this area, and to have a positive view of the contribution the research facility is making in this emerging are of science. I therefore planned and designed my communication around these objectives. I prepared by presenting to close colleagues as a 'dummy run', and used their valuable feedback to further refine the material.

The presentation appeared to be well received judging from the initial verbal feedback from delegates at the conference itself. More objectively, delegates were asked to rate each aspect of the two-day conference which included several presentations. Mine received one of the highest accolades, confirming the initial feedback. Further, we have since attracted considerable interest in this research judging by the number of contacts, and most recently we have secured additional funding from policy makers to conduct further research in this area.'

This example gives a clear example of the actual work carried out, the role the individual played in it, the reasons why it was done, and the benefit to the business.

Poor Example:

'In my current role as a research scientist I am expected to communicate my research findings to a wide range of audiences. I have presented at many conferences to a wide range of audiences across the UK and abroad. I consider communication skills to be one of my key strengths. At my most recent appraisal my line manager commended me on my communication skills. I am equally comfortable speaking to non-scientists. '

In this example, no specific evidence is given, nor indications of the type of communication, what it was used for and what the outcome was. It would also have been good to show awareness of the end customer's needs (in this case the target audience) and what the benefit was to them.

Analytical Ability – 'The ability to analyse and interpret complex information'

Good Example:

'A recent work event provided me with an excellent opportunity to provide evidence of this competency. Internal tests had produced in excess of 700 scores for 120 candidates who each completed 3 written exercises. I was able to break down this complex data and make sound recommendations to my Director. I summarised the data in Excel in a table format which was easily understood and also followed the guidelines laid out in the Personnel Manual. I then analysed this information further to show how different areas of the business had performed, and to see if there were any significant trends with regard to age or gender. I received positive feedback from line managers for this work with the result being it was subsequently displayed on our team's website. This led on to me being asked by other areas of the business to carry out further analysis of their results to try to identify any significant factors which would help them in their future planning and training requirements. Again, positive feedback was received from the end users who used the information to revise and improve their future plans.'

This example gives a clear example of the actual work carried out, the role the individual played in it, the reasons why it was done, and the benefit to the business.

Poor Example:

'In my current role as a customer service adviser I am expected to analyse lots of customer data for marketing purposes. As I have been in customer-facing roles for 11 years and have worked in both small and large organisations, in a range of service industries, I consider myself to be good at analysing information. I received a high grading at my last appraisal for my analytical skills.'

In this example, no specific evidence is given, nor indications of the type of information analysed, what it was used for and what the outcome was. It would also have been good to show awareness of the end customer's needs and what the benefit was to them.

If you have further queries please contact:

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Thank you for taking the time to complete an application form, and good luck!